

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 MCT-01 DPW-01 AID-05 OPR-02

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R 031050Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2945

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 24874

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SREF ICRC FR KS TH VS

SUBJECT: EVACUATION FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON

REF: A) BANGKOK 24318, B) GENEVA 6980

SUMMARY: FRENCH FLIGHT ARRIVES FROM SAIGON WITH 106 PASSENGERS.

SPECIAL ICRC FLIGHT FOR KOREANS IS SET FOR SEPT 9. END

SUMMARY.

1. AIR FRANCE FLEW BOEING 707 AIRCRAFT (PRESUMABLY HELD OVER FROM DAILY PARIS-BANGKOK RUN) TO SAIGON AND BACK TO BANGKOK SEPT 3 TO EVACUATE 106 FOREIGNERS FROM THAT CITY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT AMONG PASSENGERS WERE 29 KOREANS AND DEPENDENTS. AIR FRANCE SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF THAT THIS WAS A ONE-TIME FLIGHT, AND NO OTHERS ARE PROJECTED, SO FAR AS BANGKOK OFFICE AWARE.

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2. IN EARLIER CONVERSATION, AIR FRANCE EMPLOYEE TOLD EMBOFF

THAT COCKPIT OF CARAVELLE WAS APPARENTLY BADLY DAMAGED IN LAST WEEKEND'S HIJACKING ATTEMPT IN SAIGON (REF A). (PLANE REMAINS ON THE GROUND AT TAN SON NHUT.) DESPITE THE STORY THAT THE HIJACKER WAS AN EX-ARVN SOLDIER, SOURCE SAID HIS COMPANY CANNOT IMAGINE HOW ANYONE BUT A VIETNAMESE SECURITY OFFICER COULD HAVE GAINED ACCESS TO THE PLANE, WHICH THE VIETNAMESE ALWAYS CLOSELY GUARD FROM THE TIME PLANE ARRIVES UNTIL IT DEPARTS. IN ADDITION, PASSENGERS MUST PASS THROUGH THREE CHECKPOINTS, BEGINNING AT AIR VIET-NAM TERMINAL IN DOWNTOWN SAIGON, AND ARE WELL FRISKED INSIDE AIRPORT TERMINAL, IF NOW SUBJECTED TO EVEN MORE THOROUGH SEARCH. ONLY A TRUSTED PERSON WITH WIDE ACCESS AT AIRPORT COULD HAVE BOARDED THE PLACE AS THE HIJACKER DID, HE SAID.

3. WITH RESPECT TO ICRC EVACUATION FLIGHTS SET FOR NEXT WEEK (REF B), KOREAN EMBOFF ADVISED THAT FLIGHT FOR 150 OF HIS NATIONALS, WITH DEPENDENTS, IS SET FOR SEPT 9. KOREANS HOPE THAT AMONG THE 150 WILL BE THE THREE ROK DIPLOMATS CURRENTLY IN PRISON, QUESTION ON WHICH SOURCE CONFIDED ICRC IS PRESENTLY NEGOTIATING WITH VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES. THREE KOREAN NATIONALS IN SAIGON WERE PERMITTED TO VISIT ONE OF THE DIPLOMATS AT CHI HOA PRISON FOR TEN MINUTES AUGUST 20, AND WERE PERMITTED TO SPEAK ONLY VIETNAMESE. THEY REPORTED THAT THE THREE ARE IN ISOLATION FROM ONE ANOTHER, WITH THE LOW RANKING ONE WHOM THEY VISITED APPEARING QUITE EMACIATED AND HAVING HEALTH PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE POOR DIET. THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT HE HAD BEEN TORTURED. WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE KOREAN OPTIMISM THAT THE THREE WILL BE RELEASED IS JUSTIFIED. BURKE

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